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Netherlands

Livestock and Products

Dioxin crisis in Belgium and The Netherlands

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Report Highlights: In Belgium and The Netherlands, the movement of animals and products from about 675 intensive livestock farms is blocked because of possible contamination with dioxins. As a result, South Korea imposed an import ban on Dutch and Belgian pork.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
The Hague [NL1]
[NL]

On January 29, the Dutch Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (VWA) and the Belgian Food Safety Agency (FAVV) blocked the movement of animals and products from 275 farms in The Netherlands and 96 farms in Belgium. On January 30, the FAVV blocked the movement of animals and products from another about 300 farms in Belgium. The reason for the detainment is that these farms obtained feed containing pork fat from a lot with an elevated level of dioxin. A sample of animals on the farms will be slaughtered to verify the dioxin level of the meat. The farms are predominantly pig farms and a few dozen poultry farms. Because pork fat was only used in small inclusion rates in the feed, the VWA expects there are no risks for human health. The Dutch press reports that a part of the contaminated meat has already been consumed.

Background

On January 24, the Dutch VWA found dioxin levels of 25 times the permitted threshold in pork fat. The maximum permitted concentration of dioxins in animal fat destined to be used in compound feed is 2 pg TEQ / g fat. The samples were taken on December 15, as part of a regular monitoring program on feed materials. Because the origin of the contamination pointed to the Belgian fat supplier Profat, the VWA contacted the Belgian authorities.

The Belgian FAVV detained all products at the suspected Belgian fat supplier and started research at all its suppliers and customers. In addition, all samples taken during the period of possible contamination were collected and tested. On January 27, the FAVV found elevated levels of dioxin in samples taken from a single lot, stored by the Belgian fat supplier. The levels range between 6 pg TEQ / g fat and 107 pg TEQ / g fat. The FAVV and VWA blocked the movement of animals and products from all farms which obtained feed containing fat from this contaminated lot, in total 371 farms. On January 29, the FAVV tracked down another contaminated lot stored by Profat, containing a dioxin level of about 400 pg TEQ / g fat. As a consequence, the movement of animals and products from another about 300 farms in Belgium is blocked on January 30. Profat supplied the contaminated lots to in total to four feed companies in Belgium, and one in The Netherlands.

On January 30, the FAVV also found the initial source of the dioxin contamination. Both lots with contaminated fat were supplied and produced by PB Gelatins, a Belgian producer of gelatins. It appeared that during the production process hydrochloric acid with an elevated level of dioxin had been used.

As a result of the possible contamination, South Korea imposed an import ban on Dutch and Belgian pork on January 27. South Korea is the most important non-EU destination for pork produced in the Belgium and The Netherlands. Pork exports to South Korea are estimated at about 25,000 MT in 2005, with a value of about USD 75 million.